



special places 4

The Fairfax Boulevard Master Plan provides a comprehensive strategy to guide new and infill development along the Boulevard. Fundamental to the plan is the transformation of the corridor into a classic boulevard, a walkable “great street” with sidewalks, street trees, on-street parking along slow lanes, and street-oriented buildings. In addition, the plan recommends revisions to the land development regulations, improvements to special intersections along the Boulevard, the redevelopment of strip shopping centers into town blocks, and the creation of new public spaces. These ideas, or “Big Moves”, are the main ideas that are used to implement the First Principles. The Big Moves are noted on the Conceptual Build-out Plan (page 4.4 and 4.5) and are further described throughout this chapter.

The plan is organized around a series of special centers. These centers are located at key intersections and each center forms the foundation of a complete corridor. This chapter explains in detail the intended evolution of those centers and includes specific recommendations for Fairfax Circle, East Connector, Northfax, West Connector, and Kamp Washington.

The special centers along the corridor are approximately a 5 minute walk from center to edge. If streets are walkable, most people will walk a distance of approximately ¼ mile (1320 feet or 5 minutes) before turning back or opting to drive or ride a bike rather than walk. (Many neighborhoods built before World War II are about ¼ mile across.)

BIG MOVES

- *revised regulations*
- *connected street network*
- *street trees & proper sidewalks*
- *“boulevard-style” slow lane & parking*
- *special intersections at the centers*
- *strip centers converted into town blocks*
- *new public spaces*



This dimension is a recurring characteristic of the way people have settled towns for centuries. This distance relates to the manner in which people typically define the edges of their own neighborhoods. Of course, neighborhoods are not necessarily circular in design, nor is that desirable. The ¼ mile radius is a benchmark for creating a neighborhood unit that is manageable in size and feel and is inherently walkable. Neighborhoods of many shapes and sizes can satisfy the ¼ mile radius test. Fairfax Boulevard demonstrates the ¼ mile radius principle with several distinct neighborhoods or centers. The Conceptual Build-out Plan shows how to reinforce the identity and completeness of each of Fairfax Boulevard's neighborhoods with infill development and redevelopment.

The Conceptual Build-out Plan provides design details for the hypothetical build-out of the Boulevard. Off the boulevard new streets are proposed that will create pedestrian-scale blocks and, where possible, a parallel street network. New, tree-lined streets will provide equally for the pedestrian, bicycle and automobile. Civic buildings are to be located at prominent locations. New trails are planned to complete the current trail system. Parking is hidden at the rear of lots and at the centers of blocks (in structured parking where appropriate). The design of new buildings along Fairfax Boulevard will be more reflective of what is best in the city and region. Strip shopping centers are to be converted to town blocks. In areas that are exclusively commercial in use, neighborhoods that are compact, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use and

within walking distance to parks and squares will be introduced.

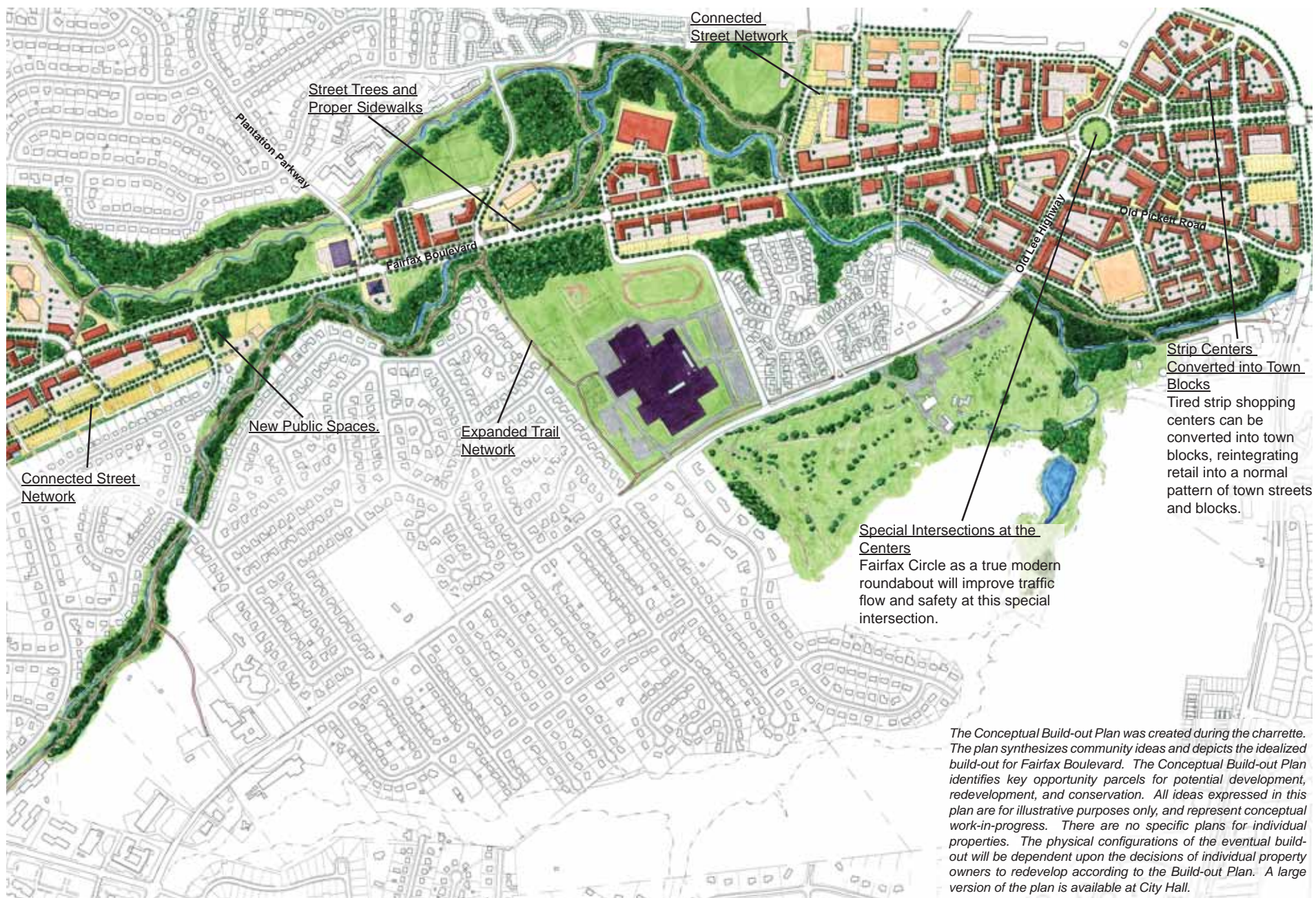
To accommodate the type of new development Fairfax citizens want along the Boulevard, the land development regulations need to be revised to focus on building form rather than just land use. The new regulations would be form-based and would have greater detail with regards to the physical design of the place residents want Fairfax Boulevard to be. Proper regulations would provide certainty for neighbors and predictability for property owners, developers, and investors. Uncertainty is the great enemy of community character and revitalization. With revised regulations that focus on the end result of achieving the Boulevard Fairfax citizens want, everyone wins.



Walkable centers along the Boulevard

CONCEPTUAL BUILD-OUT PLAN





SPECIAL PLACES

FAIRFAX CIRCLE

Fairfax Circle is located at the intersection of Old Lee Highway/Route 29 and Fairfax Boulevard at the eastern boundary of the Fairfax Boulevard Business Improvement District (BID). The circle functions as the eastern gateway to the Boulevard and to the City of Fairfax.

Although a great deal of traffic passes through the circle heading to and from Washington, D.C. to the east or Interstate 66 and the Vienna Metrorail station to the north, the circle itself is not a destination. With an average diameter of 320 feet and a center green space of about an acre, the circle is physically comparable to Dupont Circle or Scott Circle in Washington, D.C., yet the circle in its current condition is not a signature public space. The buildings at Fairfax Circle fail to enclose the public space and do not create the kind of “outdoor room” that characterizes inviting urban places. The stores and offices on the circle are one-story and are set far from the boulevard and circle behind large expanses of surface parking. The area is designed for moving vehicles quickly and is dangerous for pedestrians. The circle is currently bisected by the Boulevard and multiple traffic signals control the flow of vehicles around the circle.

The plan recommends the transformation of the circle into a distinct gateway. The intersection is realigned into a two or three lane roundabout. The center through lanes are removed and a formal park forms the center of the roundabout. By replacing the traffic signals and allowing traffic to continually circulate, the roundabout improves traffic flow. Roundabouts are proven to improve safety and reduce the frequency and severity of injury causing accidents. More information on roundabouts can be found in Chapter 5.



Street-oriented buildings that have doors and windows facing the street are introduced. The mixed-use, multi-story buildings are brought closer to the circle and enclose the space. Boulevard-style parallel roads buffer the pedestrian experience from the movement of traffic and provide on-street parking, thus eliminating some of the need for large surface parking lots.

A secondary street network is created around the circle, organizing the area into walkable blocks and

streets. Squares and public spaces are introduced. Parking is located within the blocks, either in the form of surface or structured parking. By locating parking mid-block, the parking is able to be lined with habitable space instead of the blank walls of naked garages facing the street. Additional frontage for businesses is created along the new roads.



Smaller blocks and streets enhance the pedestrian experience.

Fairfax Circle shown as a true modern roundabout.

Parking is located in the rear of lots and buildings face the street.

New residential areas

Side access lanes provide great addresses and safety for pedestrians.

The light-industrial area that currently exists should remain and be improved.

Continuous pedestrian trails are provided throughout the plan.

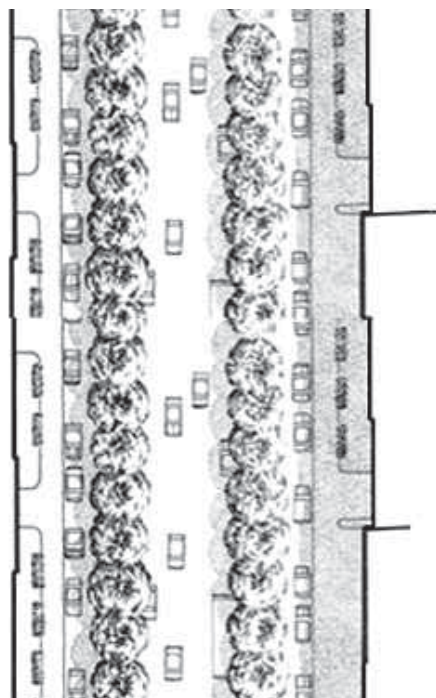
Pedestrian crosswalks are provided at every lighted intersection.

Existing businesses can remain but their parking lots may be re-configured.

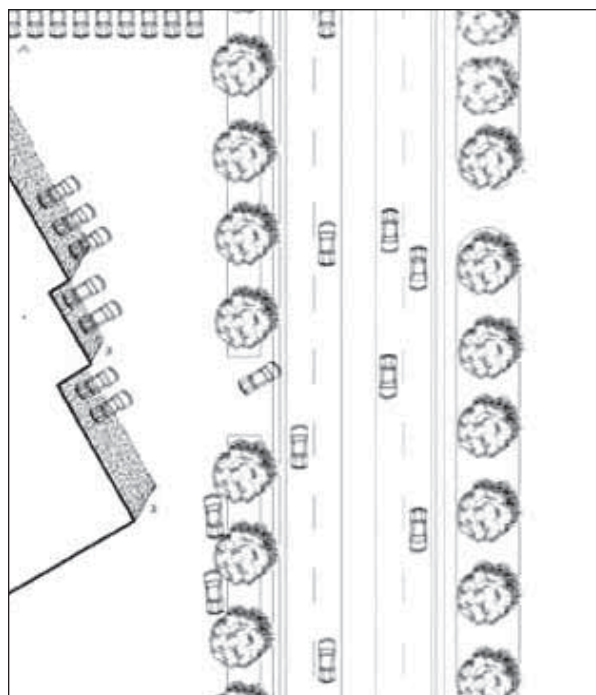
Neighborhood greens serve the surrounding businesses and residences.



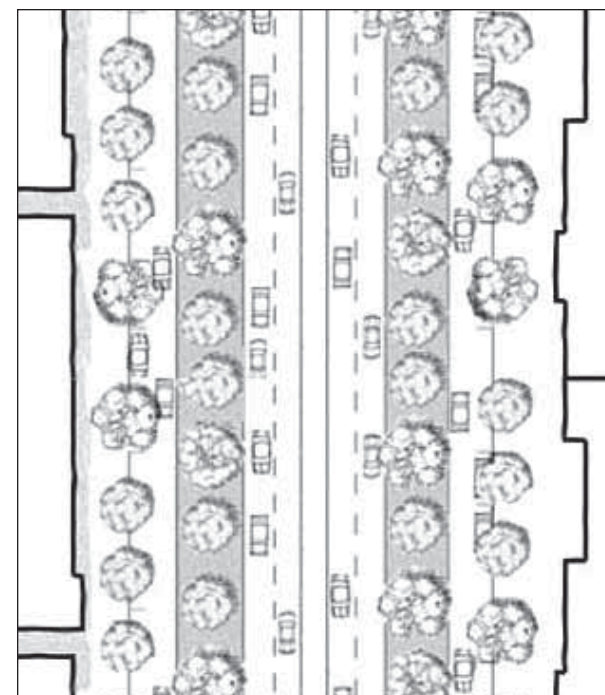
An aerial view (looking north) of the reconfigured Fairfax Circle shows the integration of a fully functional roundabout design. In addition to its efficiency as a traffic device, the redesigned circle will be a grand public space and memorable entrance to the City of Fairfax.



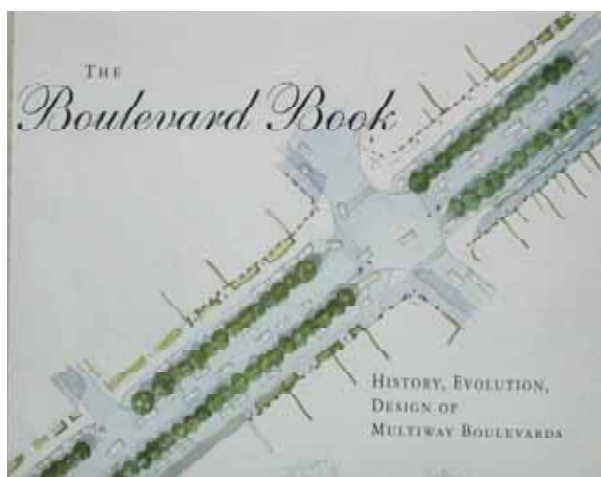
Avenue Montaigne, Paris



Fairfax Boulevard, existing conditions



Fairfax Boulevard, proposed boulevard design



The Boulevard Book by Allen Jacobs and Elizabeth McDonald

A complete multi-way boulevard is designed to accommodate both large volumes of through-traffic on its travel lanes and slower speed travel and on-street parking on side access lanes. The access lanes allow for a main street style mix of commercial businesses and residences.

The art of combining the needs of the motor vehicle with the needs of the pedestrian on one street is described comprehensively by Allen Jacobs and Elizabeth McDonald in *The Boulevard Book*.

Fairfax Boulevard was compared to one of the best examples of the multi-way boulevard street type,

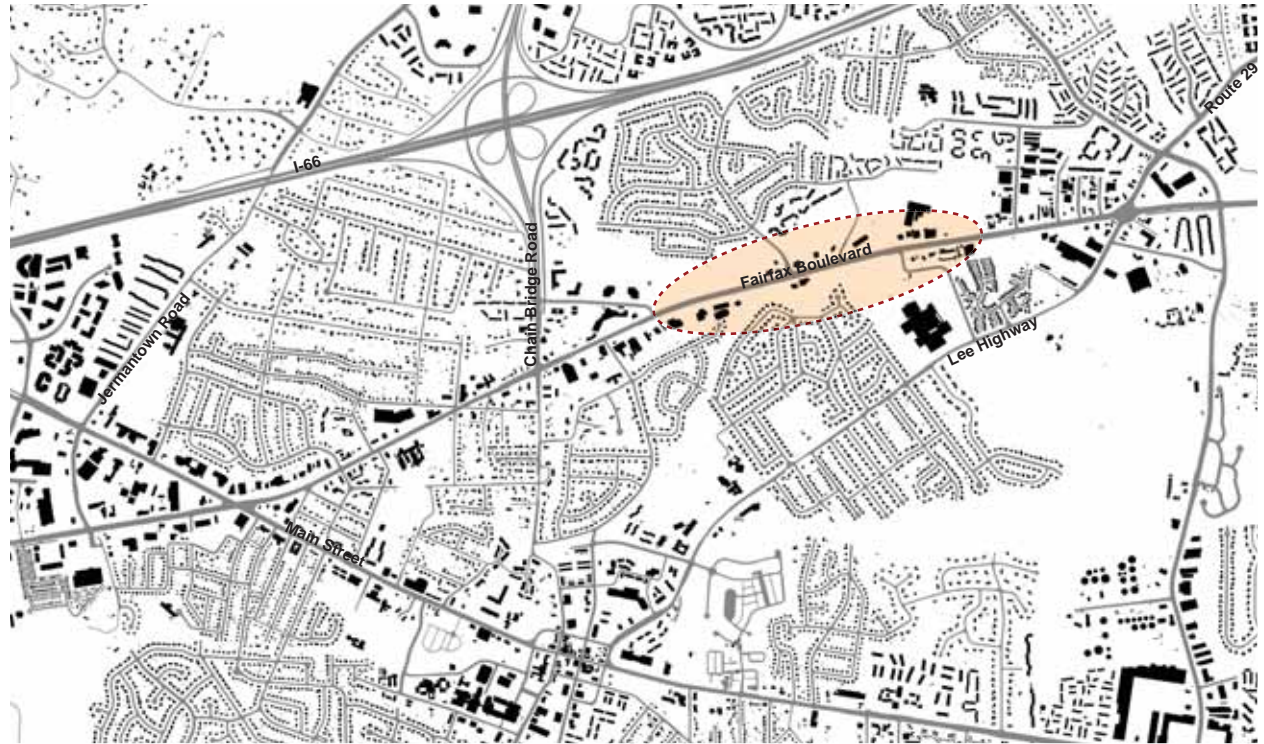
Avenue Montaigne in Paris. With its cafes, shops, hotels, embassies and banks, Avenue Montaigne is one of the most popular streets in Paris.

Avenue Montaigne and Fairfax Boulevard possess similar characteristics: street trees, sidewalks and a comparable right-of-way. However, Fairfax Boulevard (in its current configuration) lacks a "pedestrian realm" where people and vehicles move more slowly and safely. The transportation strategy for the future of Fairfax Boulevard includes the creation of a multi-way boulevard for the corridor. Additional information on boulevards can be found in Chapter 5, Transportation.

EAST CONNECTOR

The East Connector stretches the distance between the centers of Fairfax Circle and Northfax and is comprised of a combination of development sites and open spaces. The idea with the connectors is that interventions should be minimal. On the connector's north side, Accotink Creek runs parallel to the Boulevard. The stream is buffered by a 100 foot Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Area designation. Development in these areas is closely scrutinized for their effect on the streams and larger watershed. The City has purchased much of the land in the East Connector for conservation. It is anticipated that over time the development sites in the East Connector will be redeveloped.

The plan and accompanying illustrations demonstrate how new streets, blocks, and buildings could be configured. In the East Connector and other areas along the Boulevard, there exists the condition where there are single family homes just on the other side of a property line from existing commercial businesses. As the area redevelops, there are locations where lots are deep enough to introduce an intervening layer of residential development along a new parallel street. This layer of additional residential development would help to transition from commercial development along the Boulevard to the traditional single-family neighborhoods found adjacent to the corridor.



Sherwood Plaza



P. J. Skidoos Restaurant



Potential public park acquisition

New firehouse location

A prominent civic building is placed along the Boulevard at the end of Plantation Parkway.

Natural areas are preserved and protected from development.

Trails extend into Fairfax High School and strengthen its tie with the community.

The transition from the Boulevard to the residential development behind it is done by respecting the size and scale of the existing neighborhoods.

Buffers are located between commercial lots and their single family neighbors.



In the East Connector, and in other areas along the Boulevard, single-family homes are currently just on the other side of a property line from an existing commercial business. The plan for the Boulevard includes the addition of a parallel street network in many areas to relieve local traffic pressures off of the Boulevard and to allow for a new layer of residential development to abut the neighboring residences.

East Connector Improvements

Minor adjustments to the Boulevard can make a large difference in its aesthetics and functionality. Recent streetscape improvements should not be overhauled, but rather incorporated into the continued evolution of the street space. In the future, above ground utility lines should be buried, allowing street trees to fully mature and avoiding unnecessary tree trimming for utility lines. The East Connector should be improved for additional users, such as bicyclists or transit riders who do not want to get in a car to travel between Northfax and Fairfax Circle or beyond. With minor adjustments to the current roadway, there could be enough room for cyclists to proceed safely and enough space to properly plan for future transit. A dedicated transit lane could be included, providing more efficient connections to the Vienna Metrorail Station, future Metro stops, and Old Town Fairfax. Improvements to the Boulevard to accommodate multi-modal means of travel could lead to the ability to circulate between places along the Boulevard and beyond by using other means of travel besides the automobile.

Existing



Proposed

NORTHFAX

The name “Northfax” refers to the area centered at the intersection of Chain Bridge Road/Route 123 and Fairfax Boulevard. Chain Bridge Road connects with Interstate 66 to the north and Old Town Fairfax to the south. Northfax is considered by many Fairfax residents and business owners as the heart of the Boulevard.

The area between Fairfax Boulevard and Eaton Place presents one of the best opportunities to convert aging strip shopping centers (most were built in the 1960s and are in need of replacement), suburban car dealerships, and surface parking lots into a network of town blocks. The plan proposes multi-story buildings with retail on the ground floor and other uses above like offices and residences. Overhead utility wires are removed and the geometry of the intersection is reconfigured to accommodate the planted medians, street trees, sidewalks, street lights, slow lanes and parallel parking necessary for a classic boulevard. The majority of the parking is accommodated on-street and in mid-block parking locations. The buildings which line the streets give the area its character, not the expanses of parking that currently surround the intersection.

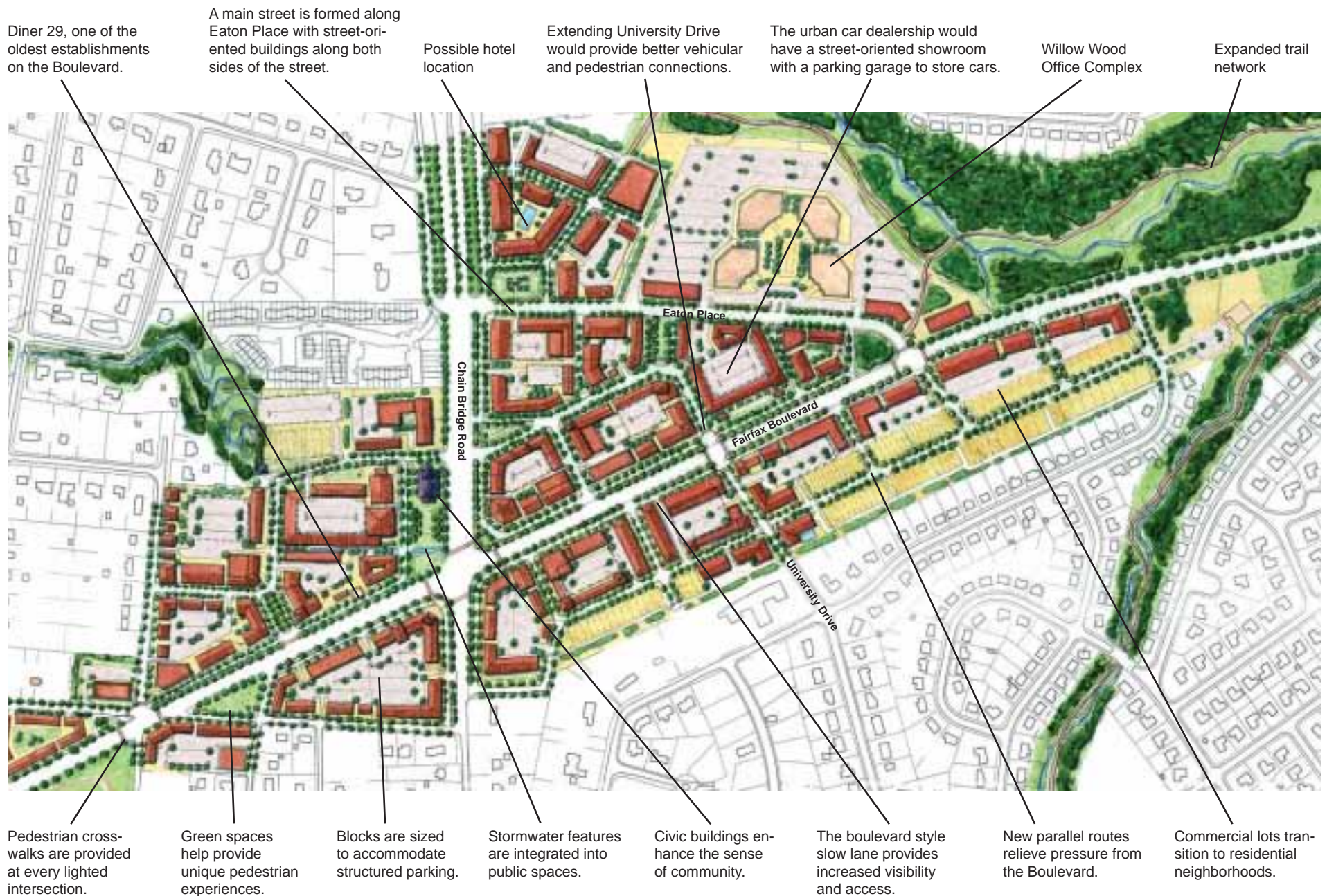
The connected street network that characterizes the northern side of Fairfax Boulevard supports a “park once” option. Visitors can park and then travel to multiple stores and services on foot along the tree-lined sidewalks. Farther distances needed for local trips can be driven on the slow lanes; regional trips can then occur on the through lanes of the Boulevard. This contrasts with the typical pattern of suburban development where each destination requires a trip along the Boulevard.



Fairfax Boulevard, looking east towards the intersection of Chain Bridge Road



Fairfax Shopping Center



EXISTING CONDITIONS



PHASE 1



PHASE 2



PHASE 3



PHASE 4



PHASE 5



The above sequence is designed to illustrate the idea that change will happen incrementally, over time. It is hard to predict which property will redevelop first, but it is important to remember that the complete redevelopment of the Boulevard will not happen overnight. The City will make public infrastructure improvements while investors and property owners build new buildings.

The Fairfax Boulevard Master Plan shows one of many ways that Northfax can be reconfigured and redeveloped over time. Understanding that redevelopment will occur over many years due to existing leases and market feasibility, the plan for Northfax is designed to include a phase-able strategy to accommodate the transformation of the area over time. Organizing the area into an interconnected street and block network, the plan demonstrates how existing buildings can be incorporated into the long-term plan for the Boulevard. As opportunities for redevelopment and infill development arise, development should be centralized into

a specific area rather than scattered throughout the center. In doing so, the property owners as well as Fairfax residents can realize the physical vision of how car dealerships and strip shopping centers can evolve from a typical suburban commercial space to a livable, memorable center. A mix of uses should be accommodated throughout the area, providing for continued retail opportunities while also allowing for residential and additional office components.

An essential element in the transformation of Northfax is the way parking is handled in the

area. Today there is surface parking in the front of the buildings. In order to accommodate a large expanse of parking, the buildings are set back far from the street. Parking is single-purpose, meaning that the available parking only serves individual businesses; there is little to no shared parking. Parking in Northfax needs to evolve from a suburban model of parking requirements and dimensions to one that accommodates a more urban, mixed-use environment. The plan for the future of Northfax calls for shared parking and for parking to be handled on-street (on existing and new streets) as well as in mid-block structures.



The redevelopment of the Northfax area (looking east) transforms this important intersection into a destination and gathering place for residents and visitors. Buildings and public spaces address the street and create a pedestrian-friendly environment. Slow lanes separate through traffic from local travel and allow easy access to shops, restaurants, workplaces, and residences.



Today: The existing conditions on Fairfax Boulevard are those of a suburban arterial roadway; the street is focused on automobile travel and is not pedestrian-friendly. This view, looking west along the Boulevard towards University Drive, demonstrates a typical condition where buildings are placed far from the street and large parking lots line the Boulevard. This condition is a result of current zoning regulations which require deep front setbacks and large parking requirements.



Initial Improvements: A slow lane is added parallel to the Boulevard, forming the framework for a proper grand boulevard. A second row of street trees are planted and a wide sidewalk is included adjacent to the slow lane. On-street, parallel parking is included within the slow lane, providing the foundation for street-oriented buildings. The slow lane includes a narrow travel lane which decreases the speed of vehicles, making the street a safe and comfortable place for cyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles.



Continued Improvements: With the introduction of the slow lane, Fairfax Boulevard becomes an address worthy of street-oriented buildings. Mixed-use, multi-story buildings front the sidewalk with doors and windows facing the street. Parallel parking allows easy access to stores and restaurants.



Long-term Vision: The pattern of redevelopment continues with both sides of the streets filling-in and becoming more complete. Over time, development along the corridor evolves from buildings located far apart in expansive parking lots to a coherently shaped street space where buildings engage the street and create a vibrant public realm. On the south side of the Boulevard, McKay Chevrolet is transformed into a visible, urban car dealership where cars are showcased in a beautiful storefront. University Drive is extended across the Boulevard and a traffic signal and crosswalks are added to assist pedestrians with crossing the Boulevard.



Computer visualizations created during the charrette help to demonstrate how future development would contribute to the existing urban fabric. Wider sidewalks, street trees, and crosswalks are just some of the details that will make Fairfax Boulevard a place where cars and pedestrians can coexist in harmony. Civic buildings, small greens and squares all create great addresses, as well as identifiable meeting places along the Boulevard. The mix of residential and commercial uses will make Fairfax Boulevard a 24-hour destination and a more vibrant place.



A. An access lane is added adjacent to the Boulevard, making a great address for existing business and new development.



B. A pavilion is the central feature of the small plaza. The pavilion could be used for either civic or commercial activities.



C. An urban hotel becomes a prominent feature along Chain Bridge Road; a sidewalk cafe adds to the street's vitality.



D. Street-oriented buildings are located along a new street, with retail uses on the ground floor and residences or offices on the upper floors.



E. Shops and residences look out onto a neighborhood green.



F. Intersections are redesigned to accommodate safe crossings for pedestrians. Brick pavers are added to the intersection to help to tell cars to slow down.



G. Parallel to the Boulevard access streets are designed for slower speeds and increased pedestrian comfort.



H. The new main street is terminated by a civic building, offering a mix of uses in a pedestrian-friendly setting.

EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



North Fork Accotink Creek bank erosion at Orchard Street



North Fork Accotink Creek heads underground when it reaches Fairfax Shopping Center.



Stormwater collected on site can be used as a public amenity creating one-of-a-kind public spaces.



Water should be treated as part of the civic art and part of a place to cherish.



Restoration efforts on Accotink Creek

The plan for Fairfax Boulevard is not just about streets and the built environment, but it is also about the green network. While great improvements have been made, the existing drainage system does not consider water as a precious resource, but rather as a nuisance to be channeled and eliminated as quickly as possible. The environmental goals of the Master Plan are to:

- activate the public realm
- use infrastructure for multiple purposes
- implement watershed management practices

RECOMMENDED HYDROLOGICAL REFORM consists of:

- treating water as a precious resource
- development of a broad palette of options
- integrating management practices
- incorporating rainwater oriented “civic art” to enhance the human landscape
- relieving flooding at Chain Bridge Road
- handle water resources upstream to treat and reduce velocity before it enters the creek
- provide adequate storage and runoff control

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE strategies include:

- continue restoration efforts on the north fork of Accotink Creek
- protected network of land and water areas
- maintain/improve ecological processes
- watershed life support system

STORMWATER strategies include:

- reducing the velocity of stormwater flows
- collecting and spreading the water into multiple areas
- getting water into the ground for storage and recharge

Recommendations for FAIRFAX CIRCLE include:

- coordinating stormwater improvement efforts with county and large property owners
- disconnecting large expanses of pavement
- redirecting drainage to green & pervious areas adjacent to Accotink Creek
- on-lot stormwater practices throughout catchment area
 - underground cisterns and storage devices
 - sand filter, wet wells and other BMPS
 - “eco-design”

Recommendations for NORTHFAX include:

- continuing stormwater improvements
- relocating Accotink Creek collection point to area north of orchard street
- connecting green & pervious areas with each other for multi-functional open space
- integrated stormwater management practices
 - underground
 - sand filter
 - “eco-design”

Recommendations for Kamp Washington include:

- continuing stormwater improvements
- disconnecting large expanses of pavement
- re-connecting green & pervious areas
- on-lot stormwater practices
 - underground storage
 - sand filter
 - “green-design”

Recommendations for Connector Areas include:

- boulevard medians and planted areas provides “green relief”
- controlling stormwater outfalls throughout
- preserving hillsides, tree areas, and drainage basins, view promontories



Unique stormwater management features can become public amenities instead of burying water underground.



Proposed green network

WEST CONNECTOR

Located between McLean Avenue to the east and the eastern edge of Kamp Washington to the west, the West Connector hosts a variety of commercial uses on relatively shallow lots. Due to its current configuration of shallow commercial parcels that abut residential properties, the West Connector is perhaps the most complicated area of the Boulevard. The plan demonstrates an understanding that there is not going to be the depth in properties to do elaborate things, like at the Fairfax Circle or Northfax. In the West Connector, simpler interventions are needed. The Master Plan sites new buildings closer to the boulevard and better mitigates the presence of the commercial uses on single-family neighbors. In order for the physical form of development change, the regulations need to change. Development in the connectors needs to be sensitive to surrounding neighbors and concerns must be addressed in the regulations to achieve the built results Fairfax residents desire.



Fairfax Boulevard looking east towards Paul VI Catholic High School

Page 4.24



Shops at Fairfax shopping center



Interconnected parking lots near the Hampton Inn hotel



Smaller footprint buildings help transition off of the Boulevard.

Neighborhood greens become special places along the Boulevard.

Providing parking in the rear helps streets become pedestrian-friendly.

Blocks are sized to accommodate structured parking.

Pedestrian crosswalks are provided at every lighted intersection.

Green buffer zones are located between commercial lots and single-family neighborhoods.

Boulevard-style slow lanes provide increased visibility to shops and restaurants.

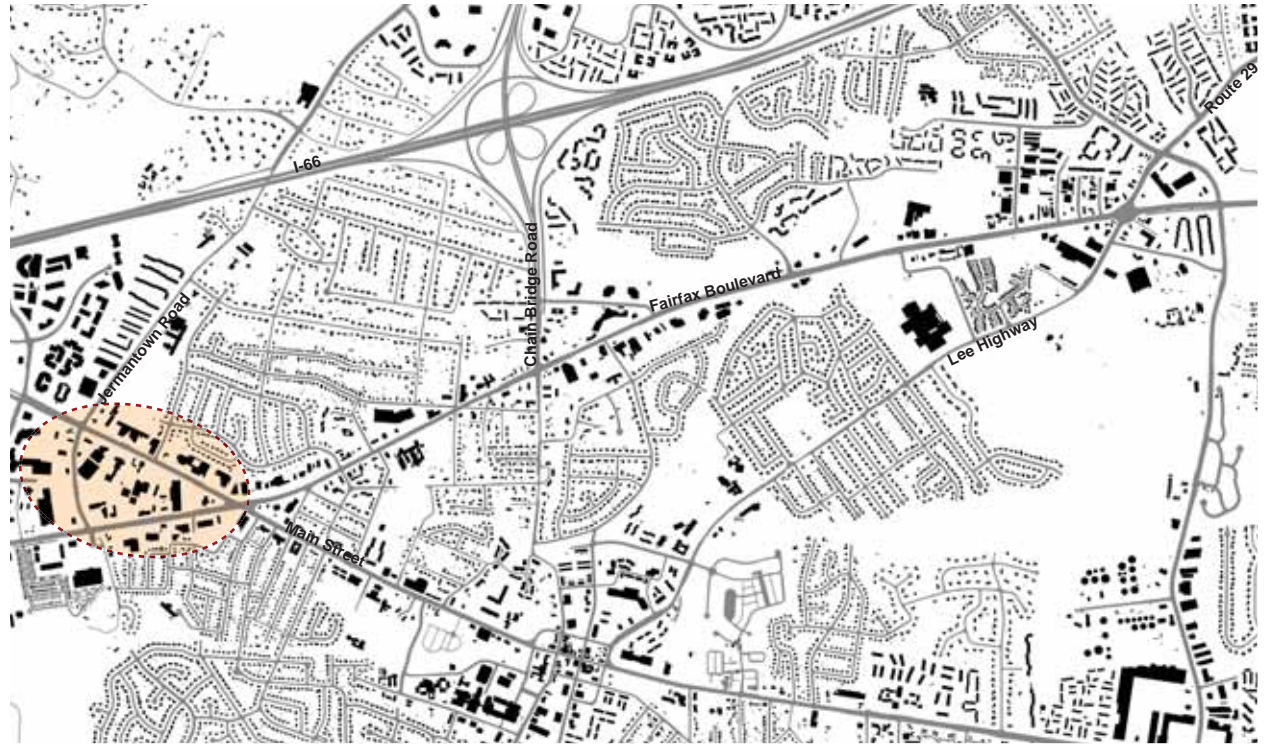
The Breezeway Motel site is redeveloped as a mixed-use project: multi-story buildings face the Boulevard and townhouses line new streets.

KAMP WASHINGTON

Kamp Washington is located at the western edge of the Fairfax Boulevard Business Improvement District (BID) at the BID's highest elevation. A triangular shape of roughly 40 acres is created between Main Street, Fairfax Boulevard, and Jermantown Road. Outside of the triangle commercial businesses border residences.

While many of the recommendations proposed for Northfax could apply to Kamp Washington, Kamp Washington is more complicated because of the oddities of geometry and fragmented property lines. The plan proposes that the super block triangle be broken up with a grid of streets which will create frontage for mixed-use commercial and residential buildings and access the underutilized area inside the triangle. A range of squares, plazas, and greens with edges defined by urban architecture create destinations within the triangle. The plan includes a network of blocks and streets that include a range of block sizes so that there are multiple options for locating parking.

The reconfiguration of Kamp Washington could include the consolidation of car dealers into an "auto district". The unique district would be a place where multiple makes of cars are available to shoppers in a park-once, shop-once walkable district. Showrooms could be configured in street-oriented urban formats to reinforce the character of the district, while inventory could be stored in one or more consolidated garages for land efficiency.



A suburban car dealership



Existing office building



Blocks are sized to accommodate structured parking.

Neighborhood greens become special places along the Boulevard.

The design anticipates incremental development.

Jermantown Cemetery

Large blocks are turned into smaller, pedestrian-scaled blocks.

Pedestrian crosswalks are provided at every lighted intersection.

Buffers are located between commercial lots and single-family neighborhoods.

The boulevard style slow lane provides increased visibility to shops and restaurants.



Future development in Kamp Washington will occur on smaller sized blocks allowing for increased connectivity and pedestrian activity. While the through lanes are preserved, boulevard-style slow lanes and shorter crossing distances help make pedestrians feel safe in a once auto-dominated environment.



The new development should be planned according to the form-based code. The code would include regulations to control building height and form, as well as a list of materials and architectural configurations that would assure quality. The form-based code can be made strict or liberal with regards to architectural style, permitting traditional architecture or a mix of styles.